

FOSTER SCHOOL DEPARTMENT MINUTES

Captain Isaac Paine School
160 Foster Center Road
Foster, RI 02825

Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2011
Open Session - 7:00 pm

1. Convene Meeting –

Kathleen Swanson, Chair called the meeting of the Foster School Committee to order on Tuesday, January 25, 2011 at 7:00pm.

a. Roll Call –

All members were in attendance. Kathleen Swanson, Chair, Shelley Pezza, Vice-Chair, member, Patricia Fountain, Interim-Superintendent, Robert M. Wallace, and FSC Secretary, Mrs. McCullough.

b. Pledge of Allegiance –

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

2. Public Presentations

a. Foster Town Council Liaison –

Mr. Neil Whitelaw, Town Council member and liaison to the School department, read a letter from the Town Council requesting that the School Department take a pay freeze for the 2010-2011 budget. The School Committee thanked the Town Council for their hard work trying to balance the current budget.

Mrs. Swanson moved items **2a & 2b** further down on the agenda, as these folks were detained.

b. State Representative – Mike Chippendale

c. State-Wide Transportation - RIDE

3. Requests to Use School Facilities –

On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Fountain, the School Committee approved the Town Council's request for school building use on the said dates. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

4. Approval of Minutes –

On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Swanson, the School Committee voted to seal the Executive Minutes of the December 21, 2010 meeting. Motion passed. Vote = 2-1-0. Vote as follows:

Mrs. Swanson – yes

Ms. Pezza – yes

Mrs. Fountain – no

On a motion by Mrs. Fountain and seconded by Ms. Pezza the School Committee approve the Open and Executive Minutes of November 23, 2010 as amended. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

Mrs. Fountain wanted to correct the Minutes of December 21, 2010 (Open) and amend Item #3 - "to two votes taken in Executive Minutes". Minutes will be corrected and resubmitted to the School Committee for approval at the February meeting.

5. Approval of Warrants –

On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Swanson, the School Committee voted to approve the Warrant #13 in the amount of \$179,349.66, dated December 31, 2010. Mrs. Swanson noted to the other members, she had reviewed and signed off on this Warrant. Mrs. Fountain asked if the bills had already been paid when she reviewed the Warrant. Mrs. Swanson replied yes. Motion passed. Vote = 2-1-0.

Vote as follows:

Mrs. Swanson – yes

Ms. Pezza – yes

Mrs. Fountain – no

6. Old Business (for discussion/action)

a. Budget 2010-2011 –

Mr. Wallace presented the School Committee with his version of the budget to makeup an anticipated deficit in the 2010-2011 budget of \$176,452 by:

1. Termination of Kathleen Walsh as of 2/25/2011 at a savings of \$31,405
2. Termination of Patricia Slate as of 2/11/2011 at a savings of \$3,828
3. Teachers, Custodians, Office staff, and Teacher Assistants and the Superintendent

return the 2% raise at a savings of \$76,816. This would leave a balance of approximately \$99,000.

4. To cover the deficit of the \$99,000 by using the Fund Balance. The School Department can expect a grant of some \$56,000. We don't have that money yet but we are anticipating the grant. When it is received it can be used to defray a salary which would have the affect of reducing the Fund Balance. On a motion by Mrs. Fountain and seconded by Ms. Pezza, the School Committee accepted Mr. Wallace's recommendation to address the \$176,452 deficit projected for the budget year 2010-2011. Mr. Wallace interjected that he has explained to the School Department staff the plight that the Town faces. The leadership of the Teachers' Union intends to return the 2% raise they received this year. Mr. Wallace has not heard from the ESP but he hopes they will follow suit. The staff in the central office has also agreed to the return of the 2% raise. The School Committee wished to thank the staff for their forfeit in light of the economic crisis that is being faced. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

Mrs. Fountain wanted to interject hers and the School Committee's recognition and appreciation of the work that Kathleen Walsh and Pat Slate have given in dedication to the school and it is with regret that these measures are occurring.

2. Public Presentation

b. State Representative – Mike Chippendale

Mr. Chippendale informed the School Committee and members of the audience the State will be cut 20% from the Federal government and explained the "roll" down affect this will have at the state level, the Town level and the School Department. All issues being considered at the State level will affect all towns. The new Governor asked for an extension for the state's budget. Mr. Chippendale commended all efforts being made at the town and school levels, because it is not going to be an easy task.

6. Old Business (for discussion/action) - continued

b. First Student Radio – update –

Mr. Wallace informed the School Committee that First Student has resolved the problem with the two way radio in the office.

c. Swamp Meadow Theater – update –

Mr. Wallace informed the School Committee that a check has been received from Swamp Meadow Theatre in full. The School Committee thanked Swamp Meadow Theatre.

d. Budget 2011-2012 –

Mr. Wallace revised the proposed budget for 2011-2012 which reflects the \$180,000 decrease and noted that it is a “level funded” budget. To accomplish this feat, the following eliminations of staff:

1. Rebecca Sullivan – from .5 FTE to 0 FTE – non renew
2. Nancy O’Hare – from 1.0 FTE to .5 FTE – full time to half time
3. Kathleen Walsh – continuing the elimination of the position
4. Patricia Slate – continuing the elimination of the position

The \$176,000 deficit for this budget year has not been addressed. Mr. Wallace recommended the 2011-2012 budget be approved as a level funded budget and that with diligence we continue to look for more savings. A motion by Ms. Pezza to accept the budget and move towards a zero budget of the amount \$4,095,103.00 did not receive a second. Mrs. Fountain did not want to second a specific amount for the budget, instead her motion was to accept the budget by Mr. Wallace as proposed for 2011-2012 and Ms. Pezza seconded. Mrs. Fountain would like to have more budget workshops and information before she makes a decision. Motion failed. Vote = 0-3-0.

Mr. Wallace informed the Committee that he would still make the same recommendations in staff eliminations in his Superintendent’s report because of the March 1st time frame.

The School Committee scheduled two more workshops for February 3, 2011 at 7:15pm and February 8, 2011 at 6:00pm. The School Committee also scheduled a “snow” date for the February 15th meeting, with a date of February 17th.

e. Legal Counsel – update

Mrs. Swanson informed the School Committee that she and Mrs. Fountain attended an Executive Session with the Foster Town Council and a conversation with the Town’s solicitor. Mrs. Fountain made a motion and Mrs. Swanson seconded, that the School Committee accepts utilizing the services of the Town’s solicitor for all legal representation, Mrs. Swanson amended to say ‘as an option’. Mrs. Swanson would like to have the option not to use the solicitor in certain legal situations. She would like to have the language more open. Motion failed. Vote = 1-2-0.

Motion as follows:

Mrs. Swanson – no

Ms. Pezza – no

Mrs. Fountain – yes

Ms. Pezza made a motion to have the option to utilize the Town solicitor as we see necessary, Mrs. Swanson seconded. Ms. Pezza withdrew her motion as did Mrs. Swanson. Motion to withdraw passes. Vote = 3-0-0.

Ms. Pezza made a motion to table “Legal Services” until the February 15th meeting, Mrs. Swanson seconded. Mrs. Fountain wanted to go on record that this item of Legal Services has been tabled two months in a row and it is costing this Committee money and that you are making a choice that is costing us more money. I understand what the gentlemen over there both said,

you want someone that has legal expertise in education law. The solicitor explained to two of us that when it came to specific areas of law that he is not familiar with and there was state law that he would then retain an expert in that area. Mrs. Swanson wanted to go on record when considering actions that can't always be based directly on the bottom line and you have to consider the quality of what's being delivered and how its going to affect what's going on in the school. Motion passes. Vote = 2-1-0.

Vote as follows:

Mrs. Swanson – yes

Ms. Pezza – yes

Mrs. Fountain – no

f. Public Comment - Policy

Ms. Pezza made a motion to table this item as we are running tight on time. Mrs. Swanson seconded. Motion passes. Vote = 2-1-0.

Vote as follows:

Mrs. Swanson – yes

Ms. Pezza – yes

Mrs. Fountain – no

Mrs. Fountain asked to be provided with a policy book.

7. New Business (for discussion/action)

a. RFP – Transportation – Bid

Mr. Wallace informed the Committee that the bids were opened just last week and he has provided the School Committee with a synopsis of the four bidders that did submit an RFP. The total contract is as follows:

Ocean State Transportation	= \$3,623,933.58
Dattco	= \$3,725,108.00
First Student	= \$3,727,492.56
Hopkins	= \$4,216,651.60

Mr. Wallace checked Ocean State Transportation references with four other school districts who gave high marks for their service. However, he is still waiting on a couple of school systems to get back to him. Ocean State is compiled of former Laidlaw Transit or First Student employees. On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Swanson the School Committee voted to approve Mr. Wallace's recommendation to have Ocean State Transportation as the school department's transportation provider beginning in 2011 school year through 2014. Mrs. Swanson withdrew her second. There was no motion on the table. Ms. Pezza made a motion with Mrs. Fountain seconding to table the RFP Transportation bid until February's meeting. Motion passes. Vote = 3-0-0. Mr. Wallace included the RFP with the analysis for the School Committee's review. Mr. Wallace responded to the question of whether current bus employees would be given preference to be employed by Ocean State and he said that in their cover letter they did indicate such.

2. Public Presentations -

c. State-Wide Transportation – RIDE –

Mr. Greg Piccirilli introduced Carolyn Dias and Paul Larson from RIDE. Ms. Dias informed the School Committee that the savings that were projected earlier are still in line and Foster's numbers are still on track. She indicated that no school district would lose money from the required state-wide special education transportation. RIDE's number for saving on the in district transportation (which is also contracted out to First Student) were still within a savings of approximately \$12,000. Another efficiency is the fact that the system is centralized, so the state

is taking all the calls from families and the families are getting serviced. Audience members were able to comment and asked their questions.

b. Budget Review Committee Recommendations

This was tabled to February's meeting.

8. Communication/Reports

a. Correspondence –

There were no communications.

b. Superintendent's Report –

a. Personnel – Non-renewals

Mr. Wallace made the following recommendations (pursuant to R.I.G.L. 16-13-2) that the employment of the following teachers be non-renewed for the 2011-2012 school year to the School Committee:

Rebecca Sullivan – non-renew

Nancy O'Hare – non-renew from FTE1.0 to FTE.5

On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Swanson the School Committee accepted the recommendation of the Superintendent with the deepest regret. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

On a motion by Mrs. Fountain and seconded by Ms. Pezza, the School Committee approved the Superintendent's recommendation to terminate the employment of Patricia Slate effective February 11, 2011 with regret. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

On a motion by Mrs. Fountain and seconded by Ms. Pezza, the School Committee approved the Superintendent's recommendation to terminate the employment of Kathleen Walsh effective February 25, 2011 with regret. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

c. Public Comment –

Mr. Cervasio made a comment.

d. Future Agenda Items

The following items were requested as future agenda items:

April Vacation being rescinded - Pezza

Audit Report – Fountain

Budget Review Committee Recommendations – Fountain

Budget 2011-2012 – Fountain

Bus contract - Swanson

Legal Services – Fountain

Public Comment Policy – Swanson

9. On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Swanson, the School Committee Voted to go into Executive Session for discussion and/or action regarding those items of business referred to in R.I.G.L. 42-46-5(a) (2) Collective Bargaining and Litigation (9) Grievances. Motion passed. Vote = 2-0-1.

Vote as follows:

Mrs. Swanson – yes

Ms. Pezza – yes

Mrs. Fountain – abstain

10. Reconvene Open Session –

On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Swanson, the School Committee reconvened into Open Session at 9:30pm. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

The chair announced that no votes were taken. There was general discussion on litigation and the grievance was postponed.

On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Swanson, the School Committee voted to seal the Executive Session Minutes. Motion passed. Vote = 2-1-0.

Vote as follows:

Mrs. Swanson – yes

Ms. Pezza – yes

Mrs. Fountain - no

11. Adjournment –

On a motion by Ms. Pezza and seconded by Mrs. Fountain, the School Committee adjourned the meeting at 9:37pm. Motion passed. Vote = 3-0-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Helena McCullough
Secretary Foster School Committee